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Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the work of its twenty-sixth session

(Vienna, 2-6 May 2011)

Summary

The twenty-sixth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names was held at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 2 to 6 May 2011, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2009/269.

The present report describes the activities of the session and presents the major findings of the Group of Experts, focusing primarily on the importance of its work in supporting United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the essential assistance it continues to afford Member States in the geographical information field and related cartographic areas.

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I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

Draft decision for adoption by the Council

1. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names recommends to the Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its twenty-sixth session, and the provisional agenda and dates for the twenty-seventh session, and the dates for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its twenty-sixth session;

(b) Decides that the twenty-seventh session of the Group of Experts shall be held in New York on 6 and 17 August 2012, and approves the provisional agenda for the session as set out below:

Provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Report of the working groups.
4. Reports of the liaison officers.
5. Organizational matters concerning the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
6. Review of the statute of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.
7. Election of officers.
8. Planning for the implementation of the recommendations of the Tenth Conference.
9. Working groups for future requirements.
10. Provisional agenda for the twenty-eighth session of the Group of Experts.
11. Other business.

(c) Decides that the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names shall be held in New York from 7 to 16 August 2012, and approves the provisional agenda for the Conference as set out below:

Provisional agenda for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of the President of the Conference.
3. Organizational matters:
   (a) Adoption of the rules of procedure;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Election of officers other than the President;
   (d) Organization of work;
   (e) Credentials of representatives to the Conference.
4. Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Ninth Conference (for distribution only).
5. Reports on the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and its divisions, working groups and task teams since the Ninth Conference.
6. National and international meetings, conferences, symposiums, publicity and publications.
7. Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names, including the economic and social benefits.
8. National standardization:
   (a) Field collection of names;
   (b) Office treatment of names;
   (c) Treatment of names in multilingual areas;
   (d) Administrative structure of national names authorities, legislation, policies and procedures;
   (e) Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors.
9. Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity (including indigenous, minority and regional language names).
10. Exonyms.
11. Toponymic data files and gazetteers:
   (a) Content requirements;
   (b) Data models and classifications;
   (c) Data maintenance;
   (d) Data standards and interoperability;

(e) Data services, applications and products (for example, gazetteers and web services).

12. Terminology in the standardization of geographical names.

13. Writing systems and pronunciation:

(a) Romanization;

(b) Conversion into non-Roman writing systems;

(c) Writing of names in unwritten languages;

(d) Pronunciation.

14. Country names.

15. Toponymic education.

16. Features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation:

(a) Features common to two or more nations;

(b) Bilateral/multilateral agreements.

17. Arrangements for the Eleventh Conference.

18. Adoption of resolutions of the Conference.

19. Adoption of the report of the Conference.

20. Closing of the Conference.

II. Items for discussion and decision

A. Report of the Chair

2. The Chair began her report (GEGN/26/10)[1] by reminding the experts that the Group of Experts' work over the past 50 years had shown that there would always be new challenges. To meet those challenges and the needs of the community, the Group of Experts would need to continue to develop methods to deal with emerging technologies and increased expectations. A summary was given of some of the recent activities of the divisions and working groups, cooperation with the secretariat and the liaison with scientific and academic groups. The Chair thanked the Statistics Division, in particular the secretariat of the Group of Experts, for its ongoing support and for the preparations for the current session.

B. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts

3. The report of the secretariat (GEGN/26/11)[1] summarized the three areas of focus, publications, the Group of Experts website and the maintenance of the Group of Experts World Geographical Names Database. Areas for future focus included continuing to improve the website, adding more information and audio files to the

[1] Available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegn3ession26.html.

database and preparing for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

C. Reports of the divisions

4. Working paper No. 83 was presented, containing a summary of the 14 divisional reports received prior to the session, as listed below. Topics addressed included the structure and contents of the reports, division compositions and level of activities, regional collaboration and joint projects. Divisional reports related to national standardization, multilingual and minority names and languages, support for international programmes, toponymic training, cultural heritage and the preservation of historical names, toponymic material and mapping programmes, databases, websites and portals, writing systems and maritime, undersea and other names. The challenges facing divisions were also mentioned. The following divisional reports were received prior to the session:

Working paper No. 3, East Central and South-East Europe Division

Working paper No. 8, Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division

Working paper No. 9, Asia South-East and Pacific South-West

Working paper No. 10, Norden Division

Working paper No. 15, Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)

Working paper No. 18, Africa Central Division

Working paper No. 35, China Division

Working paper No. 40, Arabic Division

Working paper No. 41, Africa East Division

Working paper No. 42, United Kingdom Division

Working paper No. 45, Baltic Division

Working paper No. 48, Portuguese-speaking Division

Working paper No. 75, United States of America/Canada Division

Working paper No. 76, Dutch- and German-speaking Division

Four additional division reports were received after the compilation of the summary:

Working paper No. 89, Africa South Division

Working paper No. 91, Africa West Division

Working paper No. 92, Latin American Division

Working paper No. 93, French-speaking Division

5. In addressing Working paper No. 84, the Chair emphasized that the summary report method used for the divisional reports in no way diminished the importance of the work undertaken by the divisions to support and encourage the standardization of geographical names by division members. Input was invited from the experts on methods to support divisions that were struggling, ideas on how divisional structures could be used to assist countries that did not have a national

standardization programme and the most useful or relevant tasks and projects for divisions to undertake.

D. Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations

1. International Hydrographic Organization

6. Working paper No. 88, submitted by the International Hydrographic Organization, reported on two of its activities related to geographical names: undersea feature naming and the publication *Limits of Oceans and Seas*.[2] The Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans had met twice in the past two years and had considered 92 name proposals. The Working Group on the Revision of Special Publication No. 23 had met twice to resolve issues related to the publication of the fourth edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* but had not yet achieved consensus. An expert from the Asia East Division (other than China) expressed regret over the description in the report of the International Hydrographic Organization that there had been "encouraging support" for the proposal from the Chair Group of the Working Group on the Revision of Special Publication No. 23, in spite of the objections, reservations or abstentions by a number of countries. At the Chair's invitation, the liaison officer for the International Hydrographic Organization offered details on how Member States could participate in the Subcommittee.

2. International Council of Onomastic Sciences

7. In Working paper No. 90, the liaison officer with the International Council of Onomastic Sciences reported on the activities of that organization. The Council regularly issued a journal and newsletters; it had also issued an invitation to participate in its congress in Barcelona in September 2011, to which 87 papers on toponymy had already been submitted. A terminology group had been established, which cooperated with the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.

3. Other papers

8. The following information papers were mentioned:

Working paper No. 81, Report of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History

Contact information on national geographical names authorities (GEGN/26/7)[1]

Form on contact information for national geographical names authorities (GEGN/26/7/Add.1)[1]

The Chair noted that informal contacts with the International Geographical Union had been established to discuss appropriate forms of liaison.

[2] International Hydrographic Organization, *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, Special Publication No. 23, 3rd edition (Monte Carlo, 1953).

E. Activities of the Task Team for Africa

9. In Working paper No. 4, the Coordinator for the Task Team for Africa cited the Team's recent achievements. In collaboration with the Chair of the Group of Experts and the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, training courses had been held in Nairobi in 2009 and in Yaoundé in 2010, and a course was planned to be held in South Africa in 2011. An Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) toponymic database now called "Africa GeoNyms", designed to cover all African countries, had been presented at the twenty-fifth session of the Group of Experts. Two toponymic contests had been organized in 2009 and 2011. Several workshops on toponymic standardization had been held by the Task Team at the current session.

10. In Working paper No. 60, the expert from the Africa South Division reported on the establishment, composition, activities and methodology of the Botswana Place Names Commission. The Commission addressed problems in toponymic standardization across the many dialects of Botswana and its national language, Tswana. The Commission cooperated with the Botswana national mapping agency and needed to cooperate with other African countries to benefit from their shared experiences. The expert recommended holding annual toponymic training courses in Botswana.

11. Working paper No. 51, submitted by South Africa, and a conference room paper, submitted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were not presented.

F. Implementation of resolutions and activities related to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

12. Working paper No. 46 reported on the meetings of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation, one in Nairobi in 2009 and one in Vancouver, Canada, in 2010, both of which had been held jointly with the Working Group on Publicity and Funding. The work on the searchable database of Group of Experts English resolutions was highlighted. That software could be made available for the development of a similar database for the French and Spanish resolutions. It was proposed that research on the resolutions should be conducted, in order to promote their effective implementation.

13. The following documents were submitted for information purposes:

Resolutions adopted at the nine United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names: 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1998, 2002 and 2007 (GEGN/26/8)[1]

Resolutions from the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 2007, New York (GEGN/26/9)[1]

G. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

14. The Convener of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy reported, in Working paper No. 72 (revision 1), on the training course in Yaoundé (Group of Experts) and Madrid (Pan American Institute of Geography and History)

and on the web course on toponymy. Participants on the Institute's twenty-first course on geographical names, held in Madrid in October 2009, concluded that a more advanced course was needed for sustainable progress. Further toponymic training courses were to be held at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, in September 2011, and in Indonesia in 2012. The Institute's next toponymy course would be held in Belize in August 2011.

15. Working paper No. 19 reported on an initiative of the Africa Central Division to launch activities for the standardization of geographical names. It dealt with the training course on toponymy held in Yaoundé in November 2010, which had been attended by four countries. A DVD of all presentations was distributed to official authorities in the region and to all participants. Further steps to spread toponymic information would be taken.

16. Working paper No. 47 from the Asia East Division (other than China) provided information on the fifteenth International Seminar on Sea Names, held in Sydney, Australia, in September 2009, and on the sixteenth Seminar held in The Hague in August 2010. All papers and programmes could be downloaded from http://geo.khu.ac.kr/seanames. The seventeenth International Seminar on Sea Names was scheduled to be held in Vancouver in August 2011.

17. The Convener also gave a visual presentation of the International Cartographic Association's web course on toponymy, available from http://lazarus.elte.hu/cet. The interactive course offered introductions and exercises for 11 toponymic modules and referenced the Group of Experts documents to be used. An additional nine modules were being prepared with the financial support of the Statistics Division (see http://toponymycourses.geog.uu.nl/ICAcourses/index.html). The Chair of the Arabic Division suggested that an Arabic translation of the modules of the Association's toponymy web course could be undertaken by the Division. The Convener welcomed that proposal. There would be no copyright restriction on the modules.

H. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

18. The Convener presented Working paper No. 37 containing the summary report of the Working Group's activities. The report presented the workplan, progress in the workplan since the last Group of Experts session, recent Working Group meetings and activities planned for the future.

19. Working paper No. 1, presented by an expert from the Arabic Division, discussed Algeria's geographical names database. The National Institute of Cartography and Remote Sensing had developed and completed a multistep process for compiling place names taken from topographic maps at various scales into digital files. The database would eventually also include place names taken from digital topographic map files at a scale of 1:50,000. It was currently for internal use only but might become available to the public in the future. It was noted that the place names were shown on the topographic maps and in the database in Roman script, but Arabic transcription was included in the database.

20. An expert from the Asia East Division (other than China) presented Working paper No. 7 concerning the digital Japan basic map, which was being developed by

the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan as a result of the Basic Act on the Advancement of Utilizing Geospatial Information, 2007. The digital database contained geospatial data, orthophotos and geographical names. The creation of the geographical names database had begun in 2010 with populated places. Future work would include adding the names of natural features to the database. The Authority's plans to address a variety of challenging issues in the development of the geographical names database were also discussed.

21. An expert from the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) presented Working paper No. 14 detailing the pilot project to develop the first volume of an Iranian topographic names gazetteer. Although the Iranian Government had been involved in gazetteer production for many years, the current project would be the first to include a variety of feature types (more than 100). The pilot project was over the Kashan area in the central part of the Islamic Republic of Iran and was based on 1:25,000 scale topographic maps. The report presented the feature classes, fields of information and total number of names (1,961) presented in the Kashan gazetteer. Once completed, the gazetteer would be submitted for the approval of the Iranian Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

22. An expert from the Latin America Division presented Working paper No. 17 concerning the development of the Basic Geographic Gazetteer of Spain registry under the auspices of the National Geographic Institute. The names were derived from 1:25,000 scale mapping and would be collected for a wide range of feature types. The paper detailed the seven-step approach used to review and prepare the place names to be included in the registry. The separation of authority between the Government of Spain and the autonomous communities was reviewed in the report and in the subsequent discussion. The registry was expected to be completed later in 2011 or 2012.

23. Working paper No. 26 was submitted by an expert from the East Central and South-East Europe Division. The report discussed the 2006 completion of volume 1 of the National Gazetteer of Poland, which consisted solely of hydronyms, or names of both flowing and standing bodies of water, and was the first in a series of volumes based on the Polish State Register of Geographical Names established from 1:10,000 scale maps by the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography. The report provided many informative details about the content and format of the gazetteer. The gazetteer was available for download from the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland.

24. Information concerning the Republic of Korea's marine geographical names programme was presented in Working paper No. 82. The Republic of Korea had been actively involved in standardizing marine geographical names since 2002, with 538 feature names currently registered and listed in *Kwanbo*, the official gazette of the laws of the Republic of Korea. A number of names had also been approved for inclusion in the International Hydrographic Organization/Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission-General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names.

25. Working paper No. 85 was presented by an expert from the United States of America/Canada Division. The report summarized the recent successful implementation of a web-feature service-gazetteer by the United States Board on Geographic Names for both its domestic and foreign names databases. The web service made it possible to view multiple gazetteer data sources in a common

geospatial client. Additional funding and the development of an open geospatial consortium standard for the web-feature service-gazetteer were vital for the development of future enhancements.

26. The following three papers were submitted for information only:

Working paper No. 38 related to the EuroGeoNames project

Working paper No. 43 related to the important topic of text-encoding

Working paper No. 53 outlining the benefits provided by South Africa's geographical names database

27. Eleven papers were submitted under agenda item 9; most concerned national activities but two (Unicode and EuroGeoNames) concerned international programmes. A common theme was the expanding use of geographical names data for an increasing range of purposes. That very positive trend was fully in line with resolution VIII/6 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which recommended better integration of geographical names into national and regional spatial data infrastructures. The importance of establishing and providing reliable and standardized geographical names had been recognized by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management as an essential part of geospatial information management.

I. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

28. Working paper No. 20, presented by an expert from the Arabic Division, reported on the activities of its Committee on Toponymic Terminology. The composition of the Committee had been revised in connection with the 2010 meeting in Beirut. Proposed changes to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names glossary were presented (see Working paper No. 11). Efforts to set up a common Arabic glossary of generic terms had resulted in a number of submissions, and a common layout had been proposed in order to establish and adopt unique generic forms.

29. In Working paper No. 66, an expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division reported on the third edition of the *German Glossary of Toponymic Terminology* published by Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (see www.stagn.de). With 17 new terms added and 6 terms modified, the German glossary now had 375 entries. Some systemic adjustments had been made in line with the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names glossary.

30. In Working paper No. 80, the Convener presented a report of the activities of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology. Since the last session, one meeting had been held in Uppsala, Sweden, in October 2010, and cooperation with the terminology group of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences was ongoing. A selection of examples had been discussed at the Working Group meeting, and amendments and addenda to the current United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names glossary were being proposed. A proposition to initiate a process for creating a database from the existing records of the Group of Experts

glossary (2002) and addendum (2007) was mentioned. Translation of the glossary into other languages was encouraged.

31. Working paper No. 11, submitted by the Arabic Division, proposed a number of modifications to the Arabic translation of the glossary, in particular with respect to alphabetization, translation, content and examples.

J. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems

32. The Convener summarized the activities of the Working Group since the twenty-fifty session in Working paper No. 2. Since 2009, a number of systems had been updated; they had been included in the Working paper, and on the Working Group's website, www.eki.ee/wgrs.

33. The Convener provided statistics concerning the number of United Nations-approved systems and the level of their implementation, and encouraged members with writing systems that had no approved Romanization system to present their national systems to the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names through the Working Group.

34. Working paper No. 21, presented by an expert from the Eastern Europe Northern and Central Asia Division, described the official adoption by Ukraine in January 2010 of a system for the Romanization of Ukrainian. The system incorporated several changes to the one approved in 1996, and brought into line all systems used for the Romanization of proper names in Ukraine. It was anticipated that the amended system would be presented at the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2012. Several questions concerning the update of names on Ukraine's maps and the development of systems targeted towards different receiver languages were raised.

35. Working paper No. 36 was presented by an expert from the China Division. It outlined the methods used to transfer foreign geographical names into Chinese, describing the principles behind the appropriate selection of characters and the different rules applied for foreign names written in Chinese characters. The standards were currently published in hard copy only, but it was envisaged that the eight transcription keys already created would be posted online in due course.

36. An expert from the East Central and South-East Europe Division introduced a newly ratified national system for the Romanization of Georgian and described the background to the development of the system. A Governmental commission on the identification, normalization, usage, registration and protection of names of geographical features of Georgia was responsible for overseeing the application of the system and was creating a register of names. Working paper No. 94 detailed the inventory of characters and contained descriptions of their phonetic characteristics.

K. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names

37. The Convener presented the summary report of the Working Group's activities as Working paper No. 55. The main objective of the Working Group was the compilation of the List of Country Names. The current official version had been approved at the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2007. Working paper No. 54 presented the current working

draft of the Country Names List, including updates since 2007. The Convener invited the respective experts to provide Internet addresses at which nationally approved lists of country names could be found. That information would be compiled into a working paper for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names to be held in 2012. An expert from the Romano-Hellenic Division, the expert from Greece, expressed his objection to the International Organization for Standardization country and language code and language name included in the entry concerning the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. At the request of a member from the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the Chair read excerpts from the mandate of the Group of Experts and of the Working Group, in order to clarify the mandate of the Group of Experts. The member from the East Central and South-East Europe Division made a statement expressing his deep regret regarding the content and qualifications contained in the interventions made by the experts from Greece, which, according to him, were not in accordance with the statute and rules of procedure of the Group of Experts.

38. Working paper No. 54, the current draft of the Country Names List, was submitted for information purposes.

L. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding

39. Working paper No. 5, presented by the Deputy Convener, reported on the activities of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding. Meetings had been held in Nairobi in 2009 and in Vancouver in 2010, and the Working Group had actively promoted the Group of Experts by means of a press release following the twenty-fifth session, participation in conferences with papers and posters, Group of Experts session postcards, the release of a press kit and so forth. In addition, the Working Group had worked on finding financial support for training courses and for the attendance of representatives of developing countries at the twenty-sixth session. It was recommended that the Working Group check Wikipedia information on the Group of Experts for correctness.

40. In Working paper No. 16, an expert from the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) reported on the Iranian National Committee on the Standardization of Geographical Names website (http://geonames.ncc.org.ir), recently redesigned to meet newly emerged needs for accessing information on standardized geographical names. The website provided access to the Iranian national geographical names database by means of various defined search criteria. Information relative to endonyms and exonyms related to selected features of the original database were to be added to the website at a later stage.

41. On behalf of the Working Group Convener, Working paper No. 87, an English language version of a new Group of Experts media kit, was introduced. The media kit consisted of 12 information sheets addressing core topics related to geographical names issues and to the Group of Experts. The aim of the promotional material was to advance a greater understanding of geographical names issues worldwide. After correction, the texts would be translated into the six United Nations languages.

42. Working paper No. 28, related to the Polish-language versions of the Group of Experts brochure "Consistent Use of Place Names" and of resolutions adopted at the

United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names was submitted for information.

M. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

43. The Convener reported that the proceedings of the previous Working Group meeting, which had been held in Tainach, Austria, from 28 to 30 April 2010, had been published and could be purchased on the publisher's website (www.verlagdrkovac.de).

44. The expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division presented Working paper No. 69, which put forward the position that social groups were the principal, and even exclusive, agents in the naming process, and proposed that only through perception did the exonym/endonym divide become meaningful, that divide being a logical consequence of the sociological, political and juridical nature of human interaction. Certain issues related both to the content of the paper and to the aims of the Working Group were discussed and clarified.

45. Working paper No. 64 on the establishment of criteria for the politically sensitive use of exonyms was described by the expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division. The paper provided a detailed proposed scheme of selection criteria for the appropriate use of exonyms, and presented a revised version of criteria that had been the subject of Working Group discussion at several meetings. The paper would be discussed at the out-of-session Working Group meeting.

46. Working paper No. 65, which considered whether "exonym" was an appropriate term for names of features beyond any sovereignty, was also presented by the expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division. The paper restated differing views of the Working Group members. Participants in the session considered a number of concepts fundamental to the exonym/endonym debate.

47. Three documents were listed for information:

Working paper No. 24, Polish lists of geographical names of the world

Working paper No. 68, Report of the Working Group on Exonyms

Working paper No. 71, "Trends in Exonym Use" and the proceedings of the 10th meeting of the Group of Experts Working Group on Exonyms, described above

N. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation

48. The Convener presented Working paper No. 59 describing the Working Group's meeting at the twenty-fifth session, its current workplan, and issues to be addressed at future meetings. The experts discussed the benefits of using the International Phonetic Alphabet to represent pronunciation and the possible inclusion of a less complex method of denoting sounds. The provision of digital audio files in various formats was also discussed.

49. An expert from the Arabic Division reported on geographical names work in Jordan, outlining the responsibilities of its national committee on geographical names and describing its toponymic database and mapping. Working paper No. 61

introduced the theme of Jordanian dialects, and the expert explained their geographical distribution and provided examples of differences in the regional pronunciation of terms. The research project described in the Working paper had focused on transliteration and special features of and variations in the Jordanian dialects.

50. The Convener gave a presentation on sound files in the Placenames Database of Ireland (www.logainm.ie). The database had been launched in October 2008 and contained official English and Irish language versions of approximately 100,000 place names. Sound files indicating the pronunciation of names in English and Irish were being recorded using local speakers and were being added as an important component of the database. The Convener described the categories of the names recorded and the work procedure, and gave a demonstration of the audio files.

O. Activities relating to the Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names

51. The Convener presented Working paper No. 78, which reported on progress on the Working Group's workplan and noted that the Group now had access to a web discussion forum hosted by the Government of Australia. It was agreed that the Working Group would compile web pages to be hosted on the Group of Experts website.

52. Working paper No. 23 was presented by an expert from the East Central and South-East Europe Division. The paper described Poland's 2005 Act on national and ethnic minorities and regional languages, detailed the relevant minorities, languages and areas, and reported on the resulting introduction of minority-language place names in the applicable areas. Participants discussed the paper, clarifying in particular the terminology denoting ethnicity and the status of a name.

53. Working paper No. 34 was presented by an expert from the Norden Division. The paper reported on a divisional study that monitored the inclusion of indigenous, minority and regional language group geographical names in the datasets of the Nordic National Mapping Agencies and outlined the study's results. Discussion focused on the presentation of minority language names on road signs in the respective countries.

54. Working paper No. 77, presented by an expert from the Asia South-East Pacific South-West Division, reported on the production of guidelines on respecting cultural sensitivity when conducting dialogue with indigenous communities in both Australia and New Zealand. It was noted that understanding of the specific aboriginal cultures had assisted in relationship-building and thus had facilitated information-gathering, and that the collected, community-authorized names data had been incorporated into the national nomenclature and into maps.

P. Geographical names and cultural heritage

55. Working paper No. 6, presented by an expert from the Arabic Division, summarized the association of place names in Egypt with the fundamental cultural heritage of the community. A number of factors had been involved in the creation of

the cultural facets of place names, including historical linguistic variations, the names of people, tribes and families, flora, fauna and specific events, and cultural characteristics. Those factors had blended into a rich cultural fabric represented in the place names of the country.

56. In Working paper No. 29, an expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division summarized the relationship between geographical names and the cultural heritage of Suriname. It was pointed out that Suriname was a multicultural and multilingual society, and particular processes and policies were required to ensure that the aims of cultural retention were reached.

57. Working paper No. 32, presented by an expert from the Norden Division, summarized the involvement of geographical names in a recent "campaign for cultural environment" in Finland, which was aimed at enhancing the public's interest in its immediate surroundings, including geographical names. Posters related to a number of aspects of geographical naming were put on display to raise the general awareness of the community.

58. As there was no expert from South Africa present, Working paper No. 50 on the South African national hearings on geographical names was submitted for information purposes.

59. Working paper No. 56, which outlined a concept of the evaluation of the cultural value of geographical names, was presented by an expert from the French-speaking Division. The aim of that process was to identify geographical names that could be covered by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The proposed assessment criteria were outlined.

Q. Issues of toponymic standardization

60. Working paper No. 12, presented by an expert from the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic), discussed the standardization of urban place and street names. It was pointed out that the growth of urban areas made it more difficult to ensure that place names were standardized to enable consistent data to be made available to all users. Instructions and methods had been documented to assist in that process.

61. In Working paper No. 58, an expert from the Norden Division discussed the development of a standard for location addresses in Sweden. The standard was aimed at ensuring consistency in the approximately 5 million addresses in Sweden. A handbook had been prepared to assist in the implementation of the standard.

62. Working paper No. 74, presented by an expert from the Norden Division, summarized the aims of the new law in Norway for the registration of property, including regulating the assignment of addresses to all properties. One of the aims was to preserve farm and other cultural names in the addresses. Courses had been held to assist municipal authorities in effectively managing the addressing process.

63. An expert from the East Central and South-East Europe Division presented Working paper No. 25, which outlined the structures used in Poland to achieve geographical names standardization and the current legislative frameworks. All names derived from different naming processes had been included in the database. The roles of the two advisory commissions were summarized.

64. Owing to the absence of a presenter at the session, the following working papers were not presented:

Working paper No. 52, South Africa

Working paper No. 79, Senegal

65. Working paper No. 63, which described the publication of a document entitled "Geographical Names — Variety and Norm" (Geographische Namen — Vielfalt und Norm), commemorating, among other things, the fortieth anniversary of the Austrian Board on Geographical Names, was presented for information.

R. Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors

66. After the Chair briefly described the history of toponymic guidelines within the Group of Experts, Working paper No. 70 (revision 1) was presented by the Coordinator for Toponymic Guidelines. The paper described the status of new, updated, revised or planned toponymic guidelines submitted to the Group of Experts, in preparation for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Possible solutions were offered to countries who had yet to submit toponymic guidelines. Links to pronunciation audio files for toponymic guidelines were encouraged, with the participation of the Working Group on Pronunciation, and a suggestion was made for a Wikipedia entry on toponymic guidelines.

67. Working paper No. 86 contained a template for the content of toponymic guidelines. It provided a useful reference to a standardized process for countries wishing to produce toponymic guidelines.

68. The following working papers described new, revised or updated toponymic guidelines:

Working paper No. 22, Ukraine

Working paper No. 27, Poland

Working paper No. 31, Finland

Working paper No. 39, Germany

69. The Coordinator for Toponymic Guidelines, Isolde Hausner (Austria), announced her resignation. The floor agreed to the appointment of her colleague, Hubert Bergmann (Austria), as the new coordinator.

S. Other toponymic issues

70. Working paper No. 13 described current efforts in the Islamic Republic of Iran to move away from manual field collection and registration of geographical names in favour of digital data collection. It described the development of software and methodology to increase precision and reduce errors in field collection.

71. Working paper No. 33 announced that the National Land Survey of Finland had made available data from its geographic names register free of charge. The data included web feature service as well as small-scale mapping products in vector and raster formats. In the conclusion of the paper, experts from Australia, Canada,

Jamaica, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reported that toponymic data from their countries were also available free of charge.

72. Working paper No. 73 described the increasing influence of commercial and private concerns in the naming of places in Norway. Arenas and other facilities with established names were being renamed by sponsors, and real estate companies were seeking to change names of residential developments to make them more saleable. Comments from the floor indicated that the trend was occurring elsewhere.

73. The celebration of 100 years of place name management in Quebec, Canada, in 2012 was the theme of Working paper No. 57. The history and context of the naming authorities in Quebec were summarized, and commemorative events of the Commission de toponymie were described, including a colloquium and a publication provisionally entitled "Parlers et paysages du Québec". Experts were invited to attend the events.

74. Working paper No. 49, a report from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, was offered as a supplement to the presentation given by that organization, described in paragraph 78 below.

75. Working paper No. 67 from Austria described the launch of a new toponymic book series entitled *Name and Place*, edited by Peter Jordan and Paul Woodman. The first volume was entitled *Trends in Exonym Use: Proceedings of the 10th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Tainach, 28-30 April 2010*.[3]

Special presentations

76. A presentation was given by the Chief of the Statistical Services Branch, Statistics Division, on the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, regarding the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management initiative. The lack of an intergovernmental platform to discuss the broad aspects of geospatial information at a global level had been identified and had become the motivating factor for the initiative. The envisaged general outcome was an improvement in meeting national and international spatial information needs for addressing such policy issues as climate change and natural disasters. It was pointed out that there would be no changes to the Group of Experts, but rather an opportunity to establish effective relationships that would further its work. Additional information was available at the Group of Experts website (http://ggim.un.org).

77. After noting that the Group of Experts had formally established a liaison with the Unicode Consortium in 2002, the Chair introduced two people from that consortium, one present at the session (Ken Whistler) and the other participating by videoconference (Mark Davis). The latter gave a presentation entitled "Unicode transliteration", which focused on the goals and rules of language transliteration by Unicode as displayed in a wide array of digital media, such as cell phones and computer software. An example of the toponymic use of such "transliterators" was presented, using a Google maps image of the city of Buenos Aires. The Group of Experts' participation in those efforts was welcomed.

[3] Peter Jordan and others, eds. *Name and Place*, vol. 1, *Trends in Exonym Use: Proceedings of the 10th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting, Tainach, 28-30 April 2010* (Hamburg, Dr. Kovač, 2011).

78. An update on recent activities was provided by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the global organization that coordinates the unique identifiers used for names on the Internet. Two activities relevant to the session were highlighted by the presenters (Patrick Jones and Naela Sarras), namely the internationalized domain names for countries and the generic top-level domain programme. It was noted that 3 out of the 34 requests made to the Corporation for unique internationalized domain names had been solved with help from the Group of Experts, and it was hoped that the Group would continue to provide advice as more countries made requests.

79. Kaisa Rautio Helander (on videoconference) and Carl Christian Olsen introduced a new organization called the International Council on Indigenous Place Names. Its aim was to advance and coordinate information on indigenous place names, promote the future involvement of indigenous communities in the protection of indigenous place names and make those names available to national and regional authorities. The Council had held its first conference in Norway in 2010 and would hold the second in Canada in 2013. The structure of the Council's board, including membership from geographical regions, was discussed. Cooperation with the Group of Experts was encouraged, in particular through the Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names. Mr. Olsen (President of the Council) accepted an invitation to be the liaison officer between the Group of Experts and the Council.

80. A video presentation followed by a telephone conference with Suha Ülgen enabled experts to better understand the initiative of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the Office of Information and Communications Technology regarding the proposed United Nations gazetteer framework. The project aims and objectives with respect to indexing place names databases were outlined and examples of the benefits for humanitarian aid were stressed. The project plan would cover the next three years and cooperation with the Group of Experts was implicit. Mr. Ülgen was invited to present a follow-up report at the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The Indonesian National Coordinating Agency for Surveying and Mapping (Bakosurtanal) will participate as a pilot site in the gazetteer framework project of the centre of excellence for the Statistics Division for the benefit of geographical names standardization in Indonesia.

81. A presentation was given by Crystal Sholts of Google Earth, summarizing the current situation within Google in relation to place names usage. The development and use of Map Maker, Google's community mapping tool, were also discussed.

82. A presentation was given by William Watt from Australia on recent experiences in Australia and New Zealand with regard to place names activities in natural disasters. A series of devastating bushfires, floods, cyclones and earthquakes in those countries since 2009 had challenged disaster management efforts, creating a critical need to maintain accurate and timely place names data. The various uses of place names in the management of those disasters, together with the resulting positive outcomes and needed improvements, were examined.

83. André Nonguierma and Yoseph Mekasha of ECA joined the session via videolink to report on the recent meeting of the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology. A brief overview of the meeting was given,

with particular reference to the work of the subcommittee on geo-information. It was pointed out that Member States had been asked to consider the need to set up place-naming authorities and adopt the guide prepared by the Group of Experts as a basic framework for that purpose. ECA advised that all possible support, subject to available resources, would be given to support the efforts of Member States in geographical names standardization at the strategic level and for specific projects. Discussions emphasized the need for more effective involvement by ECA in promoting geographical names in Africa.

T. Preparations for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

84. The provisional agenda for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (GEGN/26/6)[1] was circulated for information purposes. The Conference was planned to be held in New York from 7 to 16 August 2012. The Chair mentioned that the provisional agenda had been set at the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, but, if necessary, the Group of Experts could recommend amendments to the agenda at the beginning of the Tenth Conference.

U. Provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Group of Experts

85. The provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session (see sect. I) was discussed and accepted by experts. The meeting was planned for 6 and 17 August 2012, in conjunction with the Tenth Conference.

III. Organization of the session

A. Introduction

86. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/269, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names held its twenty-sixth session in Vienna from 2 to 6 May 2011.

B. Attendance

87. The session was attended by 170 participants from 60 countries, representing 20 of the 23 geographic/linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts. Thirteen observers were present. The list of participants is contained in document GEGN/26/4.[1] The list of documents is available online from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/26th-gegn-docs/GEGN/GEGN-26-5-ListDocuments.pdf.

C. Officers of the session

88. The Officers of the session were as follows:

Chair:
Helen Kerfoot (Canada)

Vice-Chairs:
Brahim Atoui (Algeria)
Ferjan Ormeling (Netherlands)

Rapporteurs:
William Watt (Australia)
Leo Dillon (United States of America)

Secretary:
Timur Alasaniya

Chief, Disarmament and Peace Affairs Branch, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

For the names of the Chairs of the divisions, see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/divisions.html. The officers of the working groups were:

Task Team for Africa

Convener:
Brahim Atoui

Rapporteur:
Naima Friha

Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

Convener:
Ferjan Ormeling

Rapporteur:
Roman Stani-Fertl

Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

Convener:
Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu

Rapporteur:
Trent Palmer

Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Convener:
Staffan Nyström

Rapporteur:
Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Romanization Systems

Convener:
Peeter Päll

Rapporteur:
Caroline Burgess

Working Group on Country Names

Convener:
Leo Dillon

Rapporteur:
Trent Palmer

Working Group on Publicity and Funding

Deputy Convener:
Botolv Helleland

Rapporteur:
Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

Convener:
Ki-Suk Lee

Rapporteur:
Botolv Helleland

Working Group on Exonyms

Convener:
Peter Jordan

Rapporteur:
Catherine Cheetham

Working Group on Pronunciation

Convener:
Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig

Rapporteur:
Caroline Burgess

Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names

Convener:
William Watt

Rapporteur:
Catherine Cheetham

D. Opening of the session

89. The Chair, Helen Kerfoot (Canada), opened the twenty-sixth session of the Group of Experts on 2 May 2011. In the course of the session, the Group held 10 meetings.

90. Mazlan Othman, Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna and Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in Vienna, made an opening statement on the increasing importance of geographical names in a world where the use of spatial information is becoming much wider in scope in order to meet the challenges of day-to-day activities and natural and man-made disasters.

91 The Chief of the Statistical Services Branch, Statistics Division, acknowledged the efforts of the Chair and the Bureau of the Group of Experts in relation to the ongoing work of the Group and the conference preparations. The Group of Experts was complimented on its willingness to reduce the time of the sessions to the five-day format. The need to ensure the technical focus of the Group's work was stressed.

92. In her opening remarks, the Chair spoke of the legacy of the many former members of the Group, including the work of Eeva Maria Närhi and Jacob Rais, both of whom had passed away in recent months. She emphasized that the Group of Experts continued to be responsible for encouraging countries to standardize and disseminate their geographical names. In that way, it could contribute to disaster management and the provision of humanitarian aid. It must address the opportunities and difficulties presented by the large amount of unauthorized data readily available through the media.

E. Adoption of the agenda

93. The provisional agenda (GEGN/26/1) was adopted without change as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Report of the Chair.
3. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts.
4. Reports of the divisions.
5. Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations.
6. Activities of the Task Team for Africa.
7. Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation.
8. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.
9. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers.
10. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.
11. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems.
12. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names.
13. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding.
14. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms.

15. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation.

16. Activities relating to the Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names.

17. Geographical names and cultural heritage.

18. Issues of toponymic standardization.

19. Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors.

20. Other toponymic issues.

21. Preparation for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

22. Provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Group of Experts.

23. Adoption of the report.

94. The draft organization of work (GEGN/26/12)[1] was adopted as orally amended.

F. Adoption of the report

95. The report of the session, as revised during its consideration, was adopted on 6 May.

96. Thanks were expressed to the Chair, Vice-Chairs, Rapporteurs, Division Chairs, Working Group Conveners and Rapporteurs, secretariat and conference services staff for their contributions to the session.